

Estate agents need to embrace online technology

The South African estate agent office can still be seen in most South African suburbs and city centres with property photographs in the window and adverts on rubbish bins. However, consumers are far better served by an estate agent that embraces online technology rather than sticking with the old model of shop fronts and offline advertising.

By [Bertie Oosthuysen](#) 19 Nov 2012

The main problem with the traditional way of doing things is that it just cannot offer the same speed and reach that online property marketing does - and that both of these factors are crucial when buying, selling or renting a property.

Traditional estate agents are very dependent on the local market as they have expensive street-facing offices, advertise prolifically in the local weekly newspaper and sell to walk-in clients. Compare this to realtors who focus on internet-based marketing. They can operate from a larger central office that serves wider surrounding areas and have more agents working in more areas looking after more customers.

Bigger audience potential

However, it is not just about simply loading all your properties onto your brand website, or for a private seller advertising a property for rent or sale on one or two online property portals. Getting the information on all the key websites speedily and into the reach of potential buyers or tenants is fundamental. This wide reach opens the door to talk to a bigger audience.

Consumers benefit by researching property online because they get more information from more agents in more areas far faster. The wealth of information available online - including virtual walk-throughs - means that buyers or renters can shortlist properties from the comfort of their home and only need visit the properties that meet their criteria.

Real-life estate agents remain crucial to the property process however advertising online can build up its agent base. Customer service is still essential and agents play an important role in setting up the deal, ensuring all relevant information is shared, servicing all the parties involved and concluding each transaction through their expert knowledge and experience. Landlords or property owners do not necessarily have the skills to correctly list their properties effectively and seldom have the time to showcase the property to prospective customers.

People should not go it alone when it comes to buying, selling or renting property - despite all the online tools they have at their fingertips. The public usually only has access to a handful of the local platforms where they can advertise their property and each takes time and money to set up. The danger is they will take longer to sell or rent the property, because they are reaching a narrower audience, resulting in properties remaining empty or sellers missing their next purchase.

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